ONLINE SERVICE-LEARNING IN A NUTSHELL

Service-learning in online contexts can happen when either or both the instructional component and the service component of the course occur online. This type of service-learning can be sometimes referred to as e-service-learning (Waldner, McGorry, & Widener, 2012) or service-eLearning (Dailey-Hebert, Donnelli-Sallee, & DiPadova-Stocks, 2008) depending on the extent to which the teaching and connected service project/activities are conducted in a completely online or hybrid format.

Service-learning pedagogy is increasingly being utilized in online and hybrid course formats. E-learning removes geographical barriers for the service to occur, potentially increasing access to service-learning experiences amongst students while promoting and increasing the reach of the university's engagement work.

Benefits of Online Service-Learning

1 Online Service-learning removes any geographical constraints from service-learning and increases students' access to such experiences. It has the potential to engage students that otherwise may be unable to participate in a service-learning activity. Furthermore, this pedagogy can help engage students in online learning environments in community-engaged work.

2 Online Service-learning can be a great medium for incorporating engagement and interaction into online courses. The service-learning aspect can provide an opportunity for online learners to engage with the course content at a deeper level while demonstrating and applying their content knowledge and skills. Finally, the reflection component of service-learning brings additional opportunities for student engagement and self-reflection as well as evaluation in an online course setting.

Types of Online Service-Learning

Online Service-learning (OS-L) can be broadly categorized into 4 main categories depending on the amount of online delivery of the instruction and service.

1 ## Type 1- Online Instruction + On-site Service

The course instruction is fully delivered online while the service is conducted on site. The instructor can either provide a list of potential service projects and sites or have the students propose a service site close to their location. This type of OS-L can be implemented in online courses through incorporating components of on-site service at a local nonprofit, school, library, etc.

2 ## Type 2- In-class Instruction + Online Service

While the course instruction is delivered in a physical classroom setting, the service is conducted online. The instructor can develop a partnership with community organizations in order to engage students in an online, remote project. This type of OS-L can be implemented in cases where the service projects that can be accomplished online and without any on-site presence – such as web development, grant writing, research-based deliverables, etc.

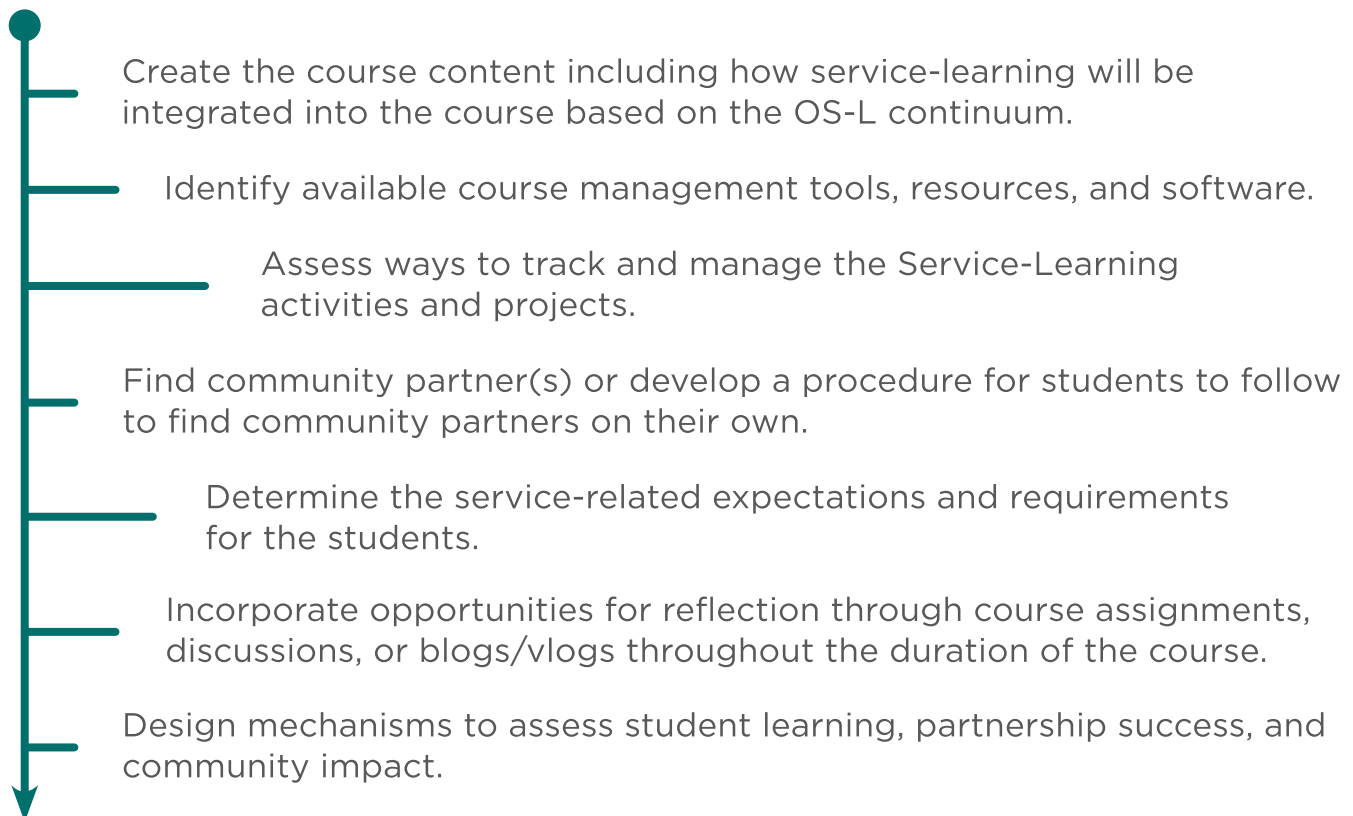**3** ## Type 3- Blended Instruction and Service

Both the course instruction and service project are conducted partially online and partially on-site. This type of OS-L can be implemented in courses with on-campus or off-campus phases.

4 ## Type 4- Completely Online Instruction and Service

Both the course instruction and service project are conducted online with no on-site activities. This type OS-L can be implemented in online courses with service projects that do not require any on-site presence.

In order to implement Online Service-learning successfully it is important for instructors to focus on preparation and logistics for the service-learning project while identifying ways to build the cultural competence of their students to engage with the community partners. Below are the major steps to consider when developing an Online Service-learning course:

- Create the course content including how service-learning will be integrated into the course based on the OS-L continuum.

- Identify available course management tools, resources, and software.

- Assess ways to track and manage the Service-Learning activities and projects.

- Find community partner(s) or develop a procedure for students to follow to find community partners on their own.

- Determine the service-related expectations and requirements for the students.

- Incorporate opportunities for reflection through course assignments, discussions, or blogs/vlogs throughout the duration of the course.

- Design mechanisms to assess student learning, partnership success, and community impact.

Additional Considerations for Implementing OS-L

- Establish a clear process for vetting community partners and/or service projects.

- Manage community partner expectations – ask yourself whether the community partners are expecting too much.

- Ensure that the communication procedures in the course and between the students, the instructor, and the community partner are clear and well-developed.

- Maintain regular feedback loops with the community partner regarding the progress of the service project.

- Regularly assess what can work better next time round.

- Assess whether the work of the students made a tangible impact or difference in the community or community partner organization.

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